Sin and the Law, Part 2
Scripture: Romans 7:7-13
Code: 45-51B

Now this is Paul's experience. But it's not only his experience, I think he speaks for all who come to true conviction. I believe that when you come to Jesus Christ, you come to the conviction that not only do you have trouble controlling the outside, but you've got worse trouble controlling the inside. All the unsaved who come to Christ come this way. They see the reality of the depth of their sin. Not only that they do wrong things but that there is an inner corruption in their nature.

The great theologian Charles Hodge says, "The law, although it cannot secure either the justification or sanctification of men, performs an essential part in the economy of salvation. It enlightens the conscience and secures its verdict against a multitude of evils which we should not otherwise have recognized as sins. It arouses sin, it increases its power, making it both in itself and in our consciousness exceedingly sinful. It therefore produces the state of mind which is a necessary preparation for the reception of the gospel. Conviction of sin, that is an adequate knowledge of its nature and a sense of its power over us, is an indispensable part of evangelical religion. Before the gospel can be embraced as a means of deliverance from sin, we must feel we are involved in corruption and misery," end quote.

Now apart from the law, people don't see this. I mean, they just go along in their life, you know, and I'm not such a bad guy. And you always hear people say, "Well, God certainly wouldn't send a good guy like me to hell, I do my very best. I try to do what's right. I obey the laws. I'm a pretty nice guy. Good people like me don't go to hell. I mean, I'm just one of the good folks." Now people really live like that. They believe that. They live, if you will, under that illusion. And that illusion has to be changed. Even though on the outside you may have control of the factors of your life and you may look like Citizen #1, the truth of the matter is on the inside you're full of what? Dead men's bones.

Now go back with me to Matthew chapter 5 and let's look at the master preacher of all preachers and see how He preached the message of salvation and what conviction was He able to bring. Matthew chapter 5, the Lord is going to preach to these Jews. And He says in verse 21 of Matthew 5, and this is the very heart of the convicting message. You know the passage, "You've heard it said by them of old, your tradition says don't kill because if you kill you might be in danger of judgment. But I'm telling you if you're even angry, or if you even hate somebody in your heart, or if you have something against somebody, you've sinned." And then in verse 27, "You've heard it said, this is your tradition, don't commit adultery. I'm telling you, don't even look on a woman to lust after her or you've committed adultery in your heart."

"You say," verse 31, "whosoever put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement." In other words, if you're going to divorce your wife, just make sure you do the paper work. Give her a paper. "I'm telling you, if you divorce her at all other than a case of fornication, you create adultery."

"You've heard it said," verse 33, "that ye shouldn't perjure yourself, but I'm telling you, don't you swear at all." They had this little swearing system that if they swore by certain things it...they didn't have to mean it. In other words, I swear by the tree over there, that was King's X, the tree didn't count. So the Jews had a whole system of swearing. Some things counted, some things didn't. And He says, I'm telling you, don't do that at all.

In other words, they had developed an external religion. And the Lord is saying the problem with you is not that you don't kill on the outside, it's that you hate on the inside. The problem with you is not that you commit adultery on the outside but that you commit it on the inside. The inside of you is wretched. And that's the way it goes all the way to the end of chapter 5.

You see what Jesus had to do in bringing men to conviction was to show them that the law of God is a law that touches the inside of a man, not just the outside of a man. And that's why when some young man came to Jesus and said, "You...what's the one thing I need to do?" He said, "Here it is, love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, your neighbor as yourself." Sound easy? Is that an external thing? That's an internal. Just in your heart love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. Everything you do, let it radiate the love of God, everything you do, let it seek His glory. Every single thing you do, let it seek His pleasure. And then beyond that, the pleasure and the good will and the benefit of someone else, not you. And you can fill the whole law up in that one thing. That really puts it inside, doesn't it? And that was convicting.

And so, as we look back at Romans chapter 7 again, that's right where Paul was at this point in his life. We don't know when it was, we don't know what point this happened, precisely the moment, the time. I tend to say, as I said earlier, that it was some time around the time of his conversion when all of a sudden the law of God went internal for him and he saw that what God was after was not some kind of external behavior to conform and be accepted by a bunch of legalists, but there was something on the inside. And when he saw the wretchedness of his coveting heart, he knew what a real sinner he was. He saw that the law condemned the sinful desire of his evil heart. A lot of people think they're moral on the outside. And they've got to see the wretchedness of the inside.

So, the intention of the law is to come and show sin to be what sin is...something that has corrupted the very nature of man deep within his being. When Paul saw that, he knew that all of his legalism was manure. The law reveals sin.

Secondly, the law aggravates or rouses sin. Verse 8, "But sin taking occasion by the commandment wrought in me all manner of coveting, for apart from the law sin is dead." Now let me begin at the end of the verse where the axiom is. Apart from the law, sin is dead. The idea is not that sin has no existence because we know it does. The idea is that until you see the law of God in its fullness, until you're really convicted of your sin, sin is dead in the sense that it doesn't overwhelm you. It doesn't rise up to pounce on you. It's dormant. It's sort of not fully active. Sin is just sort of there. But when the law of God comes in and you really see what sin is, sin then rises to become some kind of monster that you see in your life. And that's when a person really comes to Christ. That's when they're overwhelmed by this sin.

It is amazing to look, for example, at people. They just go through life and, you know, they say, "Oh yeah, it's wrong to do that and it's wrong to do this and terrible atrocities of murder and this and that," and they can generally find the sin in other people's lives rather readily. And now and then even in their own life and they want to get better. But they really don't understand the profound depth of sin. They don't see sin as some monster to consume them eternally in hell. They don't see the wretchedness of sin until someone comes before them with the law of God. And so he says at the end of verse 8, "Apart from the law, sin is dead, it's just dormant, it's just sort of there."

And what happens? Back to the front of the verse, "But sin is launched, takes occasion," the idea is kind of a military word used as a base point to launch an attack, sin is launched by the commandment, you see. As soon as the commandment of God comes in, then sin just is launched, it just takes over, it just comes to life and you're aware of the sin. And then it has the effect of causing in you all manner of lusting. It just starts making it appear all over the place.

You see, this is where we have to get people, you understand that? This is why the Puritans preached the law before they preached the gospel because you've got to get people desperate before they're going to want a Savior. You can't just waltz people into the Kingdom on positive thinking. You can't just sweep them in on, "Wouldn't you like to be happy? Wouldn't you like to have peace? Wouldn't you like to have joy? Who wouldn't? Where do I sign?" They don't even know what they're signing for. You can't...in other words, the Bible from one to the other approaches this thing the same way. God is still saying the same thing. You're wretched, you're vile, curse you. And if you try by yourself, you'll just get yourself deeper into a curse. You've got to get out from under the law and the only way you can do that is by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And the only way you'll want to do that is when you come to utter bankruptcy in terms of your own ability. And so, what happens is sin reveals the law in verse 7 and then it rouses it in verse 8. Now you know what it is and as you begin to see what it is, all of a sudden you just see lusts coming out of you you never knew were even there.

Now the law is not the culprit. Sin is. The law does a good work because the law shows you sin. Is that a good work? Sure it's a good work. Aren't you glad you saw your sin because when you saw

your sin as it really was you saw your need for a Savior, did you not? You can't preach half the message. Sin is the culprit, not the law. F.F. Bruce says, "The villain of the peace is sin, that is indwelling sin, the flesh which is aroused by the law. And these antinomians," he says, "who say our whole problem is the law are wrong. Our real problem is sin, not the law. It is thus indwelling sin, our flesh, our fallen nature which explains the weakness of the law to save us. The law cannot save us for the simple reason that we can't keep it and we can't keep it because of indwelling sin."

Have you ever read Galatians 3:21? Listen to this. "Is the law then against the promises of God? Is the law at odds with God's purposes? God forbid. For if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law." In other words, there was nothing wrong with the law. If there could have been a law to give righteousness, the law would have done it. But it couldn't. Nothing wrong with the law. Something wrong with the people. It isn't the law that's the problem, the law is not the problem, people are the problem. But what the law did was create a launching point, a base of operations, the word is aphorme(?), it means base, beachhead, a launch point. And sin just took off.

Now there's two thoughts here. When you see the law of God for what it is you become much more aware of the sin that's there. But have you noticed also that when you know that something is wrong and you see it by the law of God, there's a strange desire in you to do it and maybe you never desired to do it before you knew it was wrong? I mean, if you just, if you don't tell me I shouldn't do something, I'm not nearly so bothered about not doing it. But as soon as you tell me I can't do it, then I just want to do it. It's sort of reverse psychology, you know. People get on and tell us about how terrible certain things are..."Oh, don't go to that thing, it's horrible," and the more they talk about it the more we just want to see what it is.

John Murray writing in the very helpful book Principles of Conductsays "The more the light of the law shines upon and in our depraved hearts, the more the enmity of our minds is roused to opposition. And the more it is made manifest that the mind of the flesh is not subject to the law of God," end quote.

And when a person sees the law of God and that law is laid out in front of him very clearly and he knows what's right and what's wrong, then all of a sudden the forbidden thing becomes all the more desirable. And that shows you how really rotten man is because when confronted with the holy law of God, he doesn't find himself eager to obey it, he finds himself aggravated to even greater extent to disobey it. That's why later on in chapter 7 when we see the Apostle Paul say, "There's something in me that longs to obey the law of God," he is not talking as an unbeliever because an unbeliever when he sees the law of God is not drawn to do right, he is aggravated to do wrong by that law. So the law reveals and rouses sin. And it is a good work that the law does that.

Thirdly, it not only reveals the sin and rouses and aggravates the sin that's in him, but it devastates and destroys him. Verse 9, he says, "I was alive apart from the law once," here he doesn't mean spiritually alive, he means I was doing fine, I was really living. I mean, I was going along in my complacent unperturbed self-righteous life, everything was fine. I was just doing real well and all of a sudden this convicting upheaval when I was exposed to the law showed what sin really was. Verse 9 says, "When the commandment became clear to me, sin came to life and I was devastated...I died." What do you mean you died? "I died in the sense of all my hopes and all my dreams and everything I counted on and everything I hoped in were shattered and destroyed and ruined and devastated." This is again the loss of all security, the loss of all self-esteem, the loss of all self-satisfaction, the loss of all sense of self- preservation, the loss of all ability to think you could save yourself. I was devastated when I saw the real extent of God's law and knew my own sinfulness. So, sin ruins, it devastates. And what Paul is saying when he says, "I died" is this, I was broken in spirit, I was contrite, I was repentant, I was poor in spirit, I was mourning over my sin, I was meek before God. If you want it in the terms of Romans 5:6, "I was without strength, I was ungodly, I was in the terms of Jesus in need of a physician." And Paul has come to the point in his own life here that he is really looking for a way out of this horrendous guilt since being exposed to the law.

And I might say as a note here, the way to evaluate the genuineness of your salvation is not by your reaction to God's love, it's by your reaction to God's law. It's not by feeling good about yourself but by feeling bad about yourself. And to cater to the feeble sense of sin in the world is not to love people but to hate them. And that's why we have to reaffirm the law of God.

So, the third point here then is that the law ruins the sinner, it just devastates him. And that's exactly what God wants to do. Put him flat on his back in a hopeless, helpless, without strength condition. The law just really aggravates sin.

Somebody was writing off of a scientific experiment about a balloon, they filled a balloon with water, inflate it, fill it with water then and they bring it near a coiled rattlesnake. And the rattlesnake would feel the heat coming out of the warm water and the warm air in the balloon and strike its fangs and burst the balloon. And out would come the poisonous venom to be collected and gathered. And the experiment was interesting because it indicates that until the balloon comes near, the venom lies dormant in the glands of the snake. But when the balloon comes, it provides the occasion for the release of the poison. And I see the law in a very similar way. The poison of man's sin lies dormant until all of a sudden he's exposed to the law of God, and somehow some way, it just draws him out when he sees that thing, there's a certain attraction about the forbidden thing and spews out the venom.

John Bunyan has a wonderful picture of this in his Pilgrim's Progresswhere he has Interpreter's house, you know, and Christian is taken in there. And there's this big large room and the large room represents the heart. And the room is full of dust and the dust represents sin. And into this room

comes a man and the man is the law. And the man's got a broom. And he comes into this big room with all this dust and he just starts going like mad with this broom. And you know what happens? Just dust every place...just choking dust all over the place so that Christian is almost suffocated in there. You know what the law does? It just does that. It just comes into your life and just stirs up sin all over the place. That's its good intention. That's its good purpose so that you might see what a sinner you are, that you might seek a remedy in Jesus Christ.

Apart from the law, verse 8 says, sin is dead. Now do you see the good purpose of the law? It's first purpose, it can convict sin. Let's look at verse 10. "And the commandment which was ordained to life I found to be unto death." What a tremendous statement. The commandment which was ordained for the purpose of bringing life, I found to be rather unto death. Instead of making me live, it killed me, it slew me, it devastated me. And he's following along that same idea that sin ruins a person.

Now the law was given to provide blessedness in life. The law was given to bless, to make life full and rich and meaningful and purposeful and joyous and happy. That's why God gave the law. In fact, if you read the Old Testament over and over again, you're going to find that the text of the Old Testament says, "If you do these things, you shall prosper in life." You read Proverbs and it talks about the fact that if you're obedient and you accept the wisdom of God and you apply the wisdom of God, your days will be long upon the earth and God will give you quality of life and God will give you quantity of life and God will rich...enrich your life and God will bless your life and God will pour out abundant mercies upon your life. You see, the law of God, the commandment of God was ordained to produce life blessed. It doesn't mean just make you live physically, but to give you the fullness and the richness of what it means to be alive. It was to put men in the path of life, live to its extreme fullness.

That was the purpose of the law. But listen carefully, it cannot accomplish that purpose in an unsaved person because an unsaved person can't obey the law, therefore cannot receive its benefits of blessing. And that's what Paul is saying here. The law which God ordained to give me full, rich and meaningful life just killed me...devastated me...slew me.

You say, "Well, can the law ever give life?" Well, in the sense that Paul means it, of course. If you're a Christian and you love the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit dwells within you, the Holy Spirit in you can bring to pass the law, can He not? Look over at Romans 8:4 and I'll give you a preview. It says that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us if we walk not after the flesh but...what?...after the Spirit. The law can bring life to you in this sense, if you obey God in the power of the Spirit which you can only do if you're a Christian, if you obey God in the power of the Spirit, will God bless your life? Of course He will. Will God prosper your life? Of course He will. Will God pour out grace upon your life? Of course He will. Will God allow you to live life to its fullest? Of course He will. And that's the point. The law was given to bring blessedness to life but the only way it can ever

do what it was given to do is when man is redeemed because an unredeemed man is so overpowered by sin that he can't keep the law at all, therefore the law can't bring to him any of the meaning of life. And so the law which was designed to secure life and its fullness for men only brings about death and ruin and devastation and destruction, disappointment, disillusionment.

And I think you want to see here that life here has to do with happiness and holiness. And death here has to do with misery and sin. And when God's law comes along to an unregenerate person, all it does is show him how evil he is and make him miserable. But when God's law starts to be operating in the heart of a Christian by the power of the Holy Spirit, it brings about his happiness and his holiness and his blessedness.

So, listen, unsaved people cannot expect salvation or sanctification from the law. They can't. And that's what Paul was experiencing in his life. He was saying the commandment which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. The law of God which I thought would make my life meaningful and fill up my life with purpose and so forth, I found to be nothing but devastation to me. And then he said this in Philippians 3, "So I looked at all of the things that I had done and I said it is all dung." The law couldn't produce anything in me but manure because it is incapacitated by the sinfulness of man.

Now verse 11. And here he repeats basically the same idea, "For sin taking occasion by the commandment deceived me and by it slew me," and here again he comes back to say that sin killed him again when the law came along. He was literally devastated. "Sin finding its platform in the law became obvious to me and I was devastated. And there really is a death in this sense. I mean, Paul thought he was alive. I mean, he was going along doing what he thought was righteousness. He thought he was blameless, he was zealous for God. He was persecuting Christians. He was a member of the leadership of Israel. And he must have looked at himself and thought, "Oh, how God must be pleased with me...boy, I'm spiritually alive. I got my act together." And then he was confronted with the reality of God's holy law. He looked inside of himself and saw the evil of his own nature in his own heart and he realized that all the stuff that he had been doing didn't at all bring blessing. He counted it all manure. He threw himself on the mercy of Jesus Christ because he knew the law had not made him alive, it had just killed him. And that, my dear friend, is a deception that sin plays on you.

Go back to verse 11. He says the sin that came to my understanding by the commandment deceived me...it deceived me. How did it do that? How did sin deceive him? Because it led him to expect one thing while he was experiencing another. You see, he thought if he was just self-righteous, he'd have real life. Boy, he'd really get life...he'd get blessing...he'd get purpose...he'd get meaning. And you know what he got? Death, misery, sin, unhappiness, disillusionment, disappointment. And you want to know something? The world is filled with people just like him. And they're madly running after a religion of self- righteousness, a religion of keeping rules, a religion of saying their beads, or lighting their candles, or going to their temples, or going to their seminars and their Bible classes, or going to

hear their cultic leaders. Religions where they're told if you do so many things like this and so many like that, and if you live a certain good life and you don't do this and you do that and if you just keep all your works going and obey all these laws which supposedly God has written, if you just keep doing that you're really going to be alive. And these people go along with that stuff and they know if they think at all and look into their hearts that they're not alive at all and all the promises that were made to them by that system are unfulfilled...unfulfilled. And if they really stop and look in their hearts, they don't find life at all they find misery and unhappiness and death. And that is the deceitfulness of sin, my friend, that is the deceitfulness of sin.

Paul felt that...here's an important thought...that all desirable spiritual goals were available through the law. But when he learned the truth, he knew he had been deceived. And there are millions of people in our world who are so deceived.

I guess you could say this, the exceeding deceitfulness of sin is this, it makes people think they can please God and gain His blessing by their works. Did you get that? That is the ultimate deceit of sin. It makes people believe they can gain the favor of God and His blessing by their own works. That is a deception, isn't it? Because it isn't true. It is not true. Sin deceives.

Listen to Ephesians 4:22, "That ye put off concerning the former manner of life, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts." And then Hebrews 3:13, "Exhort one another daily while it is called today lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." O my, people, sin is so deceiving. You see, people think they're doing well and they're not. They think they're pleasing God. Do you know how many people there are who really through their religious activity think they're pleasing God by going to church and giving money and keeping certain rules, whatever rules are in their religious system, by going through the rigamarole they really think that they are pleasing God. And that is the lie of all lies and the deceitfulness of sin. If Satan wants anything, he wants people to think they're okay without the truth, right?

So, the law reveals sin, the law rouses sin and the law ruins the sinner with its deceit. You say, "Well, then the law must be bad. Oh, it must be awful. Must be a bad thing if it does all these bad things to people." No, not at all. That takes us to the fourth and final point...the law reflects the sinfulness of sin. It reveals sin, rouses sin, ruins the sinner, and reflects the sinfulness of sin.

Verse 12, listen carefully, "Wherefore the law is holy and the commandment holy and just and good." What are you saying, Paul? You just said the law reveals sin and the law rouses sin and the law ruins people by...by sin using it to deceive them. How can it be holy, just and good?

This is the key idea here, folks. In this chapter it's really the key idea. Look at verse 14, he says, "The law is spiritual." Look at verse 22, "I delight in the law." Verse 16, "The law, it is good." Paul says the law is good, the law is holy, the law is just, the law is spiritual, I delight in the law. Nothing

wrong with the law. If the law reveals sin, it's not anything that is the fault of the law.

I mean, if you take a person to court and the person is convicted and sent to prison for murder and given the death penalty, do you blame the law? Is it the law's fault? No. You want to know something? It isn't even the lawyers, it isn't even the judge, it isn't even the jury, it isn't even the court that sentences him, it is the law. And the whole purpose of a court is to merely to uphold the law. A man slams himself against the law and it is the man who is at fault, not the law.

And so it is that the law is holy, that is it is as pure as God is pure. And if God reveals His standard, it will be as pure as He is. It is just, that means it is equitable. It is fair, it is right. It is pure then and it is right, there's no wrong in the law. There's nothing unjust in the law. And finally, it is good. What does that mean? It promotes man's blessedness. So we could say it is holy in the sense that it reveals God's perfection. It is just in the sense that it is totally fair. And it is good in the sense that it promotes man's highest blessedness.

You say, "Well, how in the world could it do that? How in the world could the law by causing all this sin to flourish promote the good of man?" Because where sin flourishes, where sin abounds...what?...grace does much more abound. And as the law stirs up the sinfulness of sin, a man sees what he is and then he knows he needs a Savior and when he runs to the Savior, grace is available for him.

Now if you go back, for example, to Psalm 19 and verse 7, it says here, and this is a marvelous text on the law, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul. The testimony of the Lord is sure making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean enduring forever. The ordinances of the Lord are true and righteous all together. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold, sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb," now this, verse 11, "Moreover, by them is thy servant warned and in keeping of them there is great reward."

In other words, the law of God has a wonderful purpose. It converts the soul. It makes wise the simple. It reveals the truth. And so the law is holy and the law is just and the law is good and the law is spiritual and the law is delightful. And if man can't keep it, there's nothing wrong with the law, something wrong with man.

Now verse 13, and we come to a conclusion. "Was then that law which is good made death unto me?" In other words, does the law get the blame for my sin? And I take you right back to our analysis of a crime, a murder, a robbery or something, is the law to blame? No, the law is not to blame. The law simply reveals the sinner. So he says, "Was the law which is good made death? God forbid."

The law wasn't made into something deadly. Sin is deadly. The law was still given to produce blessing, the fullness of life. Just because man can't live up to the law doesn't mean the law's bad, it means man is bad.

Now verse 13 sums up everything by saying, "But sin that it might appear sin working death in me by that which is good, that sin by the commandment might become...what?...exceedingly sinful." You see, he's simply saying that the law reveals sin. Notice the phrase "but sin that it might appear sin." It's true character is exposed when you really understand the law of God.

Now let me just say this again so you'll understand. The reason you preach against sin and the reason you delineate the law of God so strongly in your message, and you must do this, you must preach against sin, and you must preach the holy standard of God, the reason you do that is so that sin might appear to be sin, so that men can see how short they come. You are exposing sin. And so he says when sin that it might appear sin is unmasked by the law, it works death in me by that which is good, that which is good is the law. But it brings about death. What does? The law? No, sin working off of the law.

In other words, I see the law. I see myself fall short. And I say, "O wretched man that I am, O merciful God, help me, I am a sinner." You remember the Publican beating on his breast, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Why did he say that? Because he saw he was a sinner. Because he understood the law of God. It came into his consciousness.

Now Paul's argument then is tremendously powerful. The law is holy, just and good. The law reveals and aggravates sin and uses sin to literally devastate and ruin the sinner. Now listen to this, all of this demonstrates that sin, verse 13 at the end, is exceedingly sinful. What does he mean? Listen carefully. See how sinful sin is and here's how you can see it, that sin can use the law of God which is holy, just and good to produce such terrible effects. The point being that sin can even twist, pervert the purest thing there is, that's how sinful sin is. And the law which was made to bring life, sin twists and perverts to bring death. So we say that...and what Paul is saying is sin is so sinful that it will manipulate and use the holy law of God to damn people and deceive them all the way to their damnation. The law is not at fault, sin is. Men are so evil that instead of realizing the holy purpose of God's law, they slam themselves against it, are deceived. That's the wretchedness of sin.

So, the good work of the law, its power can be seen as it drives us to despair and out of despair comes salvation. But we can also see the utter sinfulness of sin that it takes the holy, just and good law of God and uses it to work death.

Now as we come to a conclusion I want to draw you to Galatians chapter 3 and just read you several verses. Galatians 3...very important. Verse 19, "Wherefore then serveth the law? What good is the

law? It was added," says Paul to the Galatians, "because of transgressions. The law came that men might see their sin." That's the whole point we've just been making. Now watch. "Until the seed should come," who's that? The Savior, the Messiah. You see, the law came to show men their need of a Savior, to show them how utterly sinful they were until the one who could come and save them appeared.

Verse 21, "Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid." Verse 22, "But the Scripture, or the law, same thing, hath concluded all under sin." Why? "That the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." Now watch this verse, "But before faith came we were kept unto the law, shut up unto the faith which should hereafter be revealed, wherefore the law was our tutor to bring us to...what?...Christ that we might be..what?...justified by faith."

Now you understand the whole point of the law? To bring us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.

Robert Murray McShane died in 1843 at the age of 30, left a mark on this world, I have lingered long over his writings. He wrote a poem, it goes like this:

"I once was a stranger to grace and to God, I knew not my danger and felt not my load. Though friends spoke in rapture of Christ on the tree, Jehovah-Tsidkenu was nothing to me." And that, by the way, means Jehovah, our righteousness.

"I oft read with pleasure to soothe or engage Isaiah's wild measure and John's simple page. But even when they pictured the blood-sprinkled tree, Jehovah-Tsidkenu seemed nothing to me.

"Like tears from the daughters of Zion that roll, I wept when the waters went over my soul. Yet thought not that my sins had nailed the tree Jehovah-Tsidkenu, was nothing to me.

"When free grace awoke me by light from on high, then legal fear shook me, I trembled to die. No refuge, no safety in self could I see, Jehovah-Tsidkenu my Savior must be.

"My terrors all vanished before that sweet name, my guilty fear banished, with boldness I came to drink at the fountain life giving and free, Jehovah-Tsidkenu is all things to me.

"Jehovah-Tsidkenu, my treasure and boast, Jehovah-Tsidkenu, I ne'er can be lost. In Thee shall I conquer by flood and by field, my cable, my anchor, my breastplate, my shield.

"Even treading the valley, the shadow of death, this watchword shall rally my faltering breath. For while from life's fever my God sets me free, Jehovah-Tsidkenu, my death song shall be."

And in that, Robert Murray McShane put himself through the same experience of the Apostle Paul. When exposed to the true light of the knowledge of God's law, he died a ruinous death. And out of the ashes came the redemptive faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And the law cannot save us. The law cannot sanctify us. But the law can convict us to lead us in desperation to Jesus Christ.

Closing footnote. There's a word here for Christians also. If you're a Christian I think the law still has that function in your life. Now listen to what I say. You need and I need constant exposure to the divine holy standard of God so that we can see the sin in our life, too, and confess it so that we may experience the full blessing that belongs to His children, right? So when you came to Christ you came because you saw your sin and you cried out to Him, and as you live with Christ every day, you need to see your sin also so that you can confess and seek His forgiveness. And so as you study the Word of God, let the Word of God be always lifting up the standard. And as you see the standard of God's holiness lifted up and as you see the beauty of God's law lifted up, may you find yourself falling short and crying out in repentant contrition to God, even as one of His own.

I think when David said, "Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against Thee," he may have been indicating this that I keep exposing myself to your law so that I'll see the sin in my own life and repent and turn from it.

If you've come to Christ, it's because the law convicted you and you knew you needed a Savior. And He was that Savior. Bless His name.

Father, we thank You tonight that we've been able to look at Your Word and see its great truth. Use this in our hearts. Thank You for Your law. O how we love it for it led us to the Savior, it was our schoolmaster that brought us to Christ, our tutor. It was out of the desperation of seeing our sin when we saw Your law that we embraced the only hope of salvation. Then as Christians, O God, may we willingly open the Word of God and may we expose our lives to the holy standard again and again that in our coming short we may cry out in repentance, that we may ever be confessing as we confessed that first time for salvation, that we may continually know that blessedness that the law can bring to those in the power of the Spirit who obey its precepts. We thank You, Father, that we do serve that law even though we're not under its bondage, even though we are free, we serve, not out of bondage but by grace, not in our own power but in the power of the Holy Spirit. Thank You for our fellowship and for Your good word to us tonight, what a blessed evening. We praise You in Christ's name...amen.

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